

2019 WELLFLEET SHELLFISH DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted by: Nancy Civetta, Shellfish Constable

This year was marked by wild harvesters and grant holders participating in issue-driven advocacy for their industry. Many conversations with the Shellfish Department, the Shellfish Advisory Board, and state agencies and initiatives took place, which resulted in outspoken support of town home rule for shellfishing and participation in shellfish management decision-making. Local changes included a one-year domicile requirement to be eligible for a commercial shellfishing permit or named to a grant license, the opening of Lieutenant Island South to the harvest of clams during the summer, and a new set of overwintering regulations to help avoid aquaculture gear losses. Other 2019 highlights include:

- In 2019, based on preliminary state reports, Wellfleet was first in the state for the value of its shellfish landings with more than \$7.7M earned by hard-working local shellfishermen. It was first in the state for blood clam landings, first in the state for oysters (moving up from second in 2018), and second in the state for quahogs (moving up from third last year).
- We provided statistics and analysis of the importance to the Town of an Indian Neck grant/beach/conservation area that helped the Town make an historic purchase of intertidal land.
- Assistant Constable John Mankevetch and Deputy Constable Chris Manulla were awarded "Deputy Constables of the Year" by the Massachusetts Shellfish Officers Association.
- The dragger fleet has grown to 12 boats. Manulla was promoted to lead our boat patrol efforts.
- Bay scallops were abundant with much seed in the harbor. Prices for quahogs were up.
- We participated in the AmeriCorps program with a service member and group projects.
- Winter weather was volatile and south winds brought huge icebergs in from Cape Cod Bay. This caused devastation for many growers who lost much gear and oysters, as well as to the Herring River with ice carrying away oysters and leaving the flats depleted.
- Center for Coastal Studies did a sonar survey to identify lost aquaculture gear in the harbor.
- We launched a new barge and distributed 500,000 pounds of sea clam shells as cultch around the harbor to create baby oyster habitat. There was an incredible set of wild oysters, especially in North Wellfleet, and good growth was noted.
- We sold 885 recreational permits and 181 commercial permits, totaling nearly \$87,000.
- A conservative estimate of commercial catches is more than 1,742 bushels of oysters, 1,244 bushels of bay scallops, 1,106 bushels of quahogs and 689 bushels of blood clams.
- A rough estimate of recreational catches is more than 242 bushels of oysters, equal to about 73,000 oysters, which on a raw bar plate would cost at least \$146,000. More than 100 bushels of quahogs were harvested, about 25,000 pieces – that's a lot of clam sauce and chowder!
- The state Division of Marine Fisheries extended the Wellfleet bay scallop season by two weeks, but also had to create a new prohibited shellfishing area at the back of the marina.
- We initiated a Revolving Fund to provide for the long-term sustainability of our Shellfish Propagation program, and 75% of all Shellfish Fund revenue will now be deposited there.
- We received a \$17,700 grant from SPAT to bolster our recreational shellfishing program. This brings the total monies awarded to us from SPAT to ~\$30,000 over two years.
- We participated in the state-run contaminated relay and distributed 400 bushels of quahogs in Chipman's Cove and the Indian Neck recreational only area.
- We planted 335,000 juvenile oysters and 200,000 baby quahogs on our propagation bed.
- Predator resistant-sized oysters were broadcast around the harbor in the spring and fall. Grant lease holders donated more than 600,000 seed oysters. All seed oysters were pitted.

For more reports and communications, visit <http://www.wellfleet-ma.gov/shellfish-department>